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Multilingual workplaces - Interactional dynamics of the contemporary international workforce

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Abstract

This introduction situates the topic of the special issue – interaction in multilingual workplaces – in a historical context of international trade relations. It goes on to outline the research context of contemporary studies of workplace interaction. The methodological framework adopted in the studies is Conversation Analysis, a research tradition that does not have a very long history of studying multilingual interaction. We thus present and discuss the benefits and limitations of this approach to the special types of questions associated with issues such as language alternation, lingua franca usage and linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, we give an overview of the two strands of CA research that have emerged within the fields of second language acquisition (so-called CA-for-SLA) and multilingual communication. A fundamental requirement for CA research is to show that the phenomenon under scrutiny is oriented to by the parties to the interaction, and thus we give two examples of how issues of language diversity are made relevant by participants engaged in workplace interaction.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Conversation Analysis, Methodology, Globalization, Workplace interaction, Second language interaction

Introduction

The workforce in many organizations is becoming increasingly international. This is the result of two parallel globalization processes: partly with companies expanding to other countries or merging internationally, partly as a result of the labour force becoming increasingly mobile, with both 'blue' and 'white collar' workers seeking employment away from their native country. This leads to a situation where more and more employees encounter and/or use languages different from their first language(s) as their workplace language, and need to collaborate with colleagues with different cultural backgrounds. This special issue presents studies of the spoken (and embodied) interaction between such co-workers in their daily professional activities. The topics include lingua franca usage, second language interaction, displays of cultural diversity, and negotiation of identity and social relations. The approach adopted is Conversation Analysis, which sees issues of language, style, culture and identity as locally produced and managed. The studies thus aim to make a contribution to showing how issues of language and culture are contingent features of everyday workplace interaction, and focuses here on social action as an accomplishment, investigating the affordances and challenges such multilingual environments hold for the participants.

The recent decades have seen an increased scholarly interest in issues of globalisation in a range of disciplines. However, it is worth keeping in mind that international trade is by no means a recent phenomenon, and that work-related interaction between people with different language backgrounds is thus an ancient phenomenon. We therefore start this introduction by reviewing some scholarly and more popular descriptions of the phenomenon from earlier times.

A historical perspective

Writing in *The Spectator* in 1711, essayist John Addison mused on a visit to one of the 18th Century's centres of commerce, London's Royal Exchange, how:

“Nature seems to have taken a particular Care to disseminate her Blessings among the different Regions of the World, with an Eye to this mutual Intercourse and Traffick among Mankind, that the Natives of the several Parts of the Globe might have a kind of Dependence upon one another, and be united together by their common Interest.”

Although this account pre-dates the use of the term *globalisation* by some 250 years, the observation clearly illustrates that however strongly transnational mobility and communication have generated scholarly interest over the past few decades, the phenomenon of globalisation is by no means a recent one. People from different regions of the world have come into contact with one another for as long as there have been communities of people traversing the continents. What is more, the reasons for contact between groups have often been premised – in a similar fashion to the traders and business people in Addison's account – on furthering the interests of some or all parties, for example through commerce, warfare, colonial expansion, or some other shared project. Where such trades-people, warriors, crusaders, wayward sojourners, artists and missionaries have crossed paths with others from different regions, they have turned to whatever semiotic resources were at hand to conduct their ongoing business, including any shared linguistic resources at their disposal.

In 14th Century Cyprus, for example, we find Augustinian monk Giacomo di Verona observing how travellers developed skills in a range of languages (Belletto, 1996):

“Everyone in Cyprus can converse in Greek, many know Saracen and Lingua Franca, but they use the Greek language more.”¹

Such multilingual people could in turn also serve as translators and interpreters. Examples of these would be the designated *oranda-tsuuji* ('interpreters of Dutch'), who were members of Japanese hereditary interpreter families tasked with facilitating points of bilateral contact with European diplomats and traders; or the monk translators from Poland, Portugal and France, working on behalf of China and Russia in the drawing up of the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, using Latin as an official lingua franca (Perdue 2010). It would not always, of course, have been practical or possible to travel with one or several interpreters on one's international expeditions. Hence, knowledge of more than one language may have proved expedient in a person, and voyagers or people resident in popular thoroughfares such as di Verona's Cyprus would also be well-equipped to deal with the ever-fluctuating linguistic demands of transnational mobility.

Away from these transient thoroughfares, one also finds descriptions of more stable heterogeneous communities of sojourners, for example John of Würzburg's account of arriving in Jerusalem in the 12th Century, where he describes a community of various sects of Christians, which included “Greeks, Latins, Germans, Hungarians, Scots, people of Navarre, Britons, Angles, Rutherians, Bohemians, Georgias, Armenians, Syrians, Jacobites, Nestorians, Indians, Egyptians, Copts, Capheturici, Maronites and many others, which it would be a long task to list.” (in Folda, 1170/1988). Such a wide range of linguacultural groupings living in close quarters with one another speaks of the kinds of diversity witnessed in present-day cosmopolitan centres worldwide, and attested to the multicultural make-up of the mediaeval Crusader communities. Expounding on this in 1124, Fulcher of Chartres

¹ “Omnes de Ciprio loquuntur grecum, bene tamen sciunt saracenicum et linguam francigenam, sed plus utuntur lingua greca”.

notes how in the Levant there was a substantial amount of language co-existence as well as linguistic mixing, leading to new local varieties:

“People use the eloquence and idioms of diverse languages in conversing back and forth. Words of different languages have become common property known to each nationality, and mutual faith unites those who are ignorant of their descent... He who was born a stranger is now as one born here; he who was an alien has become a native” (in Folda, 1996:82)²

The wide scale trans-border mobility which brought these culturally and linguistically diverse people and peoples into one another’s close quarters was not arbitrary of course. These people were members of an ‘imagined community’ (Andersen, 1983) that extended beyond the shifting nation state boundaries that marked their ethnic or national affiliations. Whether as members of a potpourri of Christian faith that stretched far and wide across the European continent and Levant, or members of a mercantile community with tentacles stretching to all corners of the globe, these diverse people were brought into contact and relationship with each other around to some shared project. Their mobility involved transient members of oscillating and overlapping communities engaged in face-to-face activities together to further some cause, and ordinarily carried out in interaction with one another. In his 1711 account, Addison rejoices, for example, at the sights and sounds of international trade being conducted at his local Royal Exchange in London:

I have often been pleased to hear Disputes adjusted between an Inhabitant of *Japan* and an Alderman of *London*, or to see a Subject of the *Great Mogul* entering into a League with one of the *Czar of Muscovy*.

Then, as much as today, we note that Addison highlights how contact between these people was not context-free: these are situated interactions, organised around cooperation between these diverse people, shared projects and joint initiatives, collaborative partnerships and jointly coordinated activities, trade, diplomacy, the arts, architecture, construction, destruction, warfare, academia, sex work, courtship. It was situated mutual engagement that formed the backbone around which these points of contact were organised. It is a picture of the international workplace of the transnational operator of yesteryear.

In sum, although transnationally mobile staff, contractors and clientele have more recently come to characterize the locally constituted workplace communities, the phenomenon of such transient multilingual settings (Goebel 2010) is far from recent. Rather, as evidenced by Chartres’ account of his time in the Levant, inter-lingua-cultural contact between traders, slave-keepers and the enslaved, families, localized ethnic sub-groups, soldiers, pilgrims and crusaders from multitudinous geographical, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and across, for example, the entire Mediterranean region, were commonplace a long time before linguists, social scientists and human resources managers started to take note (to say nothing of similar situations in other parts of the world).

Turning to the contemporary, although such linguistically and culturally dynamic hot spots, Addison’s centres of commerce or di Verona’s thoroughfares were every bit as international as those witnessed today, the very *scale* of penetration into a wide range of social strata and spheres is unprecedented. This shift in gear is also reflected in the growing numbers of researchers from a range of academic disciplines, as well as such stakeholders as public and private sector organizations, paying increasing heed to the changing dynamics of the internationalized workplace.

2 “Diversarum linguarum coutitur alternatim eloquio et obsequio alteruter. Linguam diversa jam communis facta utrique fit nota, et jungit fides quibes est ignota progenis... Qui erat alienigena, nunc est quasi indigena, et qui inquilinus est, utique incola factus.”

Workplace Studies

In this collection, we build on a growing field of workplace research which has contributed substantially to our knowledge of the fine coordination involved between interactants who are engaged in institutional activities. Over recent years, a dynamic body of research has been concerned with the constitution of talk and social action in organizational environments, and is invariably referred to as workplace studies (Luff et al, 2000; Rawls, 2008). Workplace studies research aims to generate a body of knowledge which, in the first place, is able to feed directly back into the specific settings being investigated (thus fulfilling an applied research aim). In addition, it furthers theoretical understanding of how members negotiate, in situ, appropriate intersubjective norms and practices for the carrying out of their everyday affairs as competent members of their communities (a pure research aim).

Findings from workplace studies have thrown light on the ways in which people's institutional identities are worked up in interaction, and can demarcate the participation frameworks relevant to these social settings (see for example, Brassac et al, 2008; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000; Luff & Heath, 2002; Deppermann et al, 2010; Mondada, 2004). Heritage (1997), for instance, argues that the institutionality that marks much of our social reality, rather than being defined through its relation to some essentialist structure, is 'talked into being' by relevant parties engaged in pursuing their workplace outcomes. This dynamic, emergent perspective of institutionality shows how organizations are constituted through a conjointly managed 're-specification of the interactional practices that inform conversational organisation' (Heath & Luff, 2007, p216), including modifications to general turn-taking practices, lexical registers, and embodied actions such as gesture and the utilization of artefacts in the material surroundings.

This line of scholarship has, over the past decades, unpacked the shared, situated constitution of such institutional activities, practices and identities as medical procedures (e.g., Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007), auctions (e.g., Heath & Luff, 2007), dentistry (e.g., Hindmarsh et al., 2011), service encounters (Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2013) and control rooms (e.g., Arminen et al., 2014). This line of research takes as point of departure an ethnomethodological understanding of the emergent, conjoint nature of how institutional environments are enacted. It foregrounds the practices through which members index their understanding of the activities in which they are involved, producing together particular patterns of witnessable, accountable conduct. This includes practices of talk-in-interaction, for which Conversation Analytic procedures are adopted as the natural choice of methods for investigation.

Although workplace studies have shown language to constitute a central resource in the organisation of the activities in which members are engaged, language competences, identities and repertoires of the members have not typically been treated as consequential to the research carried out. Whether the members in the settings described are first or second language users, whether they are fully proficient in the working language(s) of the setting, or in the institutional registers that characterise this or that workplace, whether they must negotiate language choice, or whether their linguistic competences impact on their level of engagement in a particular setting or activity, these features are often left unexamined. Indeed, although drawing heavily on Conversation Analytic methods for the analysis of institutional talk-in-interaction, the role of *language* itself has rarely been topicalized in these studies, and culture here has been understood more as a local set of practices, rather than as a wider set of norms and practices into which members have been socialized. As such, what has usually gone unreported in these studies is the often highly internationalized nature of the cohorts that populate the scenes. However, in these settings we may find members who are challenged to work with others from very different lingua-cultural backgrounds – colleagues, clients, employees - while coordinating their work activities. These members may be required to adopt new practices, show increased

flexibility in how working relations are established, and may seek to draw on a wider bank of communicative resources in achieving successful outcomes in their everyday work life.

This is where the work presented in the current issue differs in orientation, acknowledging issues of language and how these both impact on the workplace settings being studied, or are part and parcel of how these workplace interactions are organised, including at the level of professional identity, the range of communicative possibilities, and the status of the working language for the members. Hence, although the work presented here is equally characterised by its focus on workplace practices, our particular interest is in institutional settings characterized by the cultural and linguistic diversity of its participants, both the members of the workforce and their business clientele. Our contribution aims to foreground the sociocultural and linguistic implications of internationalization within these settings, with a particular research focus reflecting the changing social ecologies of a vast network of institutional domains from around the world, that result from unprecedented trans-cultural and trans-national mobility.

The CA approach to multilingualism

As touched upon above, the methodological perspectives taken here have their origins in the American sociological subfield commonly known as Ethnomethodology (EM) (Garfinkel, 1967). EM approaches the study of human sociality with an understanding that there are *methods* used by members of a social group in how they navigate their social situations. The goal of the researcher to explicate these *members' methods* for conducting social life (hence *Ethno-methodology*), rather than impose upon the objects of study any *a priori* theoretically derived categories, as is typical elsewhere in the social sciences. Within an EM approach, social order is achieved by the participants *in situ*, relying as they do on their common-sense knowledge of situated action in order to accomplish orderliness in their conjoint social activities. Rather than being treated as 'cultural or judgmental dopes', "unknowing or deluded about their own milieu, their own society, and as requiring correctives from the professional sociologist" (Watson, 1997, 63), social structure is considered to be generated in interaction by the members themselves. How these members' own conceptions and procedures constitute their interactional and other social practices, this forms the object of investigation.

EM inspired a number of lines of research, most notably Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) and Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) (Sacks, 1972). These approaches take as central premise that sociality must be understood from the viewpoint of the participants engaged in it: CA by investigating systematic practices in the sequential organization of conversation, and MCA by focusing on procedures through which members associate particular activities or characteristics with categories of people. By explicating the practices which members use in their displays of understanding of ongoing activities, researchers are given a window into the constitution of social order *in situ*. CA and MCA typically use audio or video-recordings and artefacts collected in natural settings. Ethnographic observation is here not discouraged, but primary data for CA and MCA remain those archived instances of social life, recordings of naturally occurring interaction, or examples of documentation sourced from everyday social activity.

The guiding principles for empirical analysis in this tradition may be described as an inductive orientation, an emic perspective and a sequential approach. First, the formulation of problems and objects of analysis should be based on the data and the participants' concerns in them rather than on pre-defined theoretical problems or hypotheses. For this collection, this implies that issues of multilingualism or second language proficiency are addressed as they manifestly occur as a concern for the participants themselves in their everyday activities, rather than being guided by a pre-defined theoretical interest in 'superdiversity', 'translanguaging' or other fashionable academic concepts.

Second, an emic – or participant-based – perspective involves including in the analysis only the context the participants themselves invoke in and through their talk, rather than the external contextual categories the analyst may find relevant. Each participant in a conversation may ‘objectively’ be categorised according to a range of different social criteria (gender, occupation, age, nationality, mother tongue, etc.) and situational roles (manager, employee, customer, etc.), but in order to know which of these contextual features are relevant to the participants the researcher needs to see how they make various identities relevant through their forms to talk. This does not mean that they will have to mention explicitly certain social categories, but that they will perform certain actions conventionally associated with a certain type of social group or role, so-called *category bound activities* (Sacks 1992). Thus, even the speakers' status as L1 and L2 speakers, 'language learners', etc. is not to be imposed from the outside, but rather to be demonstrated in the analysis.

Finally, the basis for interpreting the utterances is not the analysts understanding of them, but the interlocutors' reactions in subsequent turns at talk, the so-called *next turn proof procedure*. The object of analysis is thus the *participants'* understanding of each other utterances as displayed in their reactions and responses. Multilingual practices such as language choice, code switching, language mixing thus need to be studied as they are *endogenously* oriented to by the participants, rather than *exogenously* defined by the researcher (Mondada 2007). This requires a sequential approach to data analysis, in which each utterance is interpreted by reference to the responses it engenders by the co-participants.

CA studies of multilingualism and second language interaction

The overwhelming focus in CA has been on monolingual first language (L1) interaction between what Garfinkel (1967) termed ‘collectivity members’ of relatively stable sociocultural groups (Firth, 1996). In these interactional events members are considered able to rely on normative patterns of interactional organization based on an ever-accumulating set of prior experiences - Garfinkel's *documentary method of interpretation* - in their engagement in subsequent related social activities. An earlier critical note was sounded by Wagner (1996b, p232), when he argued that,

“[CA] takes linguistic competence on the part of the conversationalists for granted. The prototypical conversationalist is a monolingual speaker in a stable first language setting, preferably the analyst's own”.

Schegloff has countered, however, that L2 talk-in-interaction was never actively excluded as a research object in CA, but only became a relevant topic when researchers interested in interactions with L2 users started applying CA to this type of data, arguing that “nonnative talk is just a sub-area in the study of talk-in-interaction” (Wong & Olsner, 2000, p119).

However, in deploying CA for the study of second language conversation, many of the assumptions regarding both members' methods for producing social order, and subsequently analysts' reliance on their own membership knowledge, cannot be assumed to be unproblematic. Wagner (1996a, p145) articulates the dilemma when he asks, “[h]ow do the participants make sense for each other? Which membership knowledge is shared by the participants as a background for and basis upon which their conversational actions are undertaken?”

In starting to analyse interactions in which one or both parties speak a second language, CA researchers entered a domain where discourse analysts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) had for some years showed an interest in interaction as a form of input for language learning. The history of this research topic dates back to Ferguson (1975), who coined the term *foreigner talk* to describe how first language speakers modify their talk in order to accommodate to the perceived proficiency level of L2 speakers. In the following years, several researchers within the field of second

language acquisition continued this line of research by describing a broad range of grammatical and interactional modifications made by L1 speakers (e.g. Hatch 1978, Long 1996, Varonis and Gass 1985, Pica, Young and Doughty 1987, Bremer et al. 1996). In spite of a self-declared interest in the 'negotiation of meaning', this research tradition was criticized by CA researchers for taking for granted the relevance of language learning and for being focused only on the actions of one party to the interaction (Firth & Wagner 1997).

As an alternative to this approach, CA researchers started investigating L2 conversation as a form of interaction in its own right, both in pedagogical or in non-pedagogical settings (Gardner & Wagner 2004). Contrary to the assumptions of many discourse analytic studies, CA studies of lingua franca interaction in workplace settings showed that the speakers seldom attended to language issues in their everyday conversations. They let linguistic errors pass without notice, and only rarely 'flagged' language problems (Firth 1996, Wagner & Firth 1997).

Today, two strands of CA research deal with issues of multilingualism, one focused on processes of language learning as a member's concern, so-called 'CA for SLA' (Markee 2000), and one focused on multilingual interaction. There are clearly obvious areas of overlap between the approaches, but they differ in whether or not the main focus is on pedagogical processes and activities.

The CA-for-SLA approach deals with language learning in at least two different respects (Sahlström 2011). First, it describes the activity of language learning, that is, how participants orient to linguistic items as 'learnables' (Majlesi & Broth 2012) and how the *activity* of teaching and learning such items is realized in conversation. Second, it deals with how language learners' acquisition of lexical items and grammatical structures is displayed in conversation, for instance in longitudinal data (Eskildsen 2015). The approach also addresses questions that have not been traditionally dealt with in SLA, namely speakers' development of interactional competence (Hall, Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler 2011). Examples are how L2 speakers learn to initiate repair (Hellerman 2011) or produce disagreeing responses (Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger 2011). Finally, this approach also differs from traditional SLA in showing interest in how language learning occurs in everyday interaction outside of pedagogical activities, so-called 'language learning in the wild' (Wagner 2015).

Three contributions to the current special issue fall within this tradition. Tranekjær studies how L2 speakers may be trained to provide effective demonstrations of understanding when asked whether or not they understand. Day & Kristiansen analyze how issues of language competence is displayed in interaction, and Svennevig describes how a construction worker acquires technical vocabulary in a second language in everyday workplace interaction.

The CA approach to multilingual interaction deals with questions of language choice and language alternation in contexts where several languages or registers are used by the interlocutors. Examples are issues of code-switching and language mixing, lingua franca interaction, interpreting and language brokering. The CA approach to code switching focuses on the interactional functions of switching rather than on the internal processes of the speakers (e.g. Auer, 1984; Gafaranga, 2000). An example can be to switch between languages in order to address different parties to a conversation or to distinguish between different activities (Mondada, 2004, 2007). Others would be the practice of maintaining an institutional or corporate language policy, with particular languages reserved for different activities (e.g. Hazel, 2015), or doing identity work as a bi- or multilingual speaker (e.g. Li Wei, 1998; Gafaranga, 1999; Moore, 2017; Hazel 2017).

Three contributions to this special issue fall within this approach. Mondada studies how greetings are used as a practice for negotiating the language of the interaction and Oloff how unspecific repair initiators may be interpreted as signaling problems with the choice of language. Finally, Greer &

Leyland analyze the practices used to introduce or explain potentially problematic names or terms in a lingua franca.

Speakers' orientation to language in multilingual settings

Returning to Schegloff's statement that this "nonnative talk just a sub-area of the study of talk-in-interaction" (Wong & Olsner, 2000, p119), in the same way what might be considered native talk is just a sub area, for many of the participants in these data, this type of linguistic environment is the default. The world in which they live is a multilingual one. This may be due to the particular communities to which they are born – from the Indian subcontinent to Luxembourg or Rwanda, from Los Angeles to Hong Kong; or due to the effects of transnational movement, processes of globalization, the rise and reach of the Internet. These are people who may use one set of languages in the home and another set in their place of work or study. For some, they may rarely have occasion to use their L1, if indeed there is a language they consider to be their L1. Language attrition may complicate such considerations even further: when a speaker stops using what was once considered their L1, can we still speak of their 'native language'?

These are the considerations which underpin the rationale for the current special issue, while adopting a thematic point of departure in the study of the multilingual workplace. We would like to consider how the multilingual environment of workplace settings is implicated in the institutional activities of their members. As an illustration of how consequential issues of language choice are in the organisation of such settings, consider the following short excerpts. In the first, two German national students at a university in Denmark approach a helpdesk situated in the International Office with an inquiry (see also Hazel, 2015).

Excerpt 1 International Office helpdesk. Marianne – Staff, Danish; Anita and Brigitta -German students

18 ANI: xx
19 MAR: *hej*
hi
20 (2.6)
21 ANI: we have a (.) question
22 MAR: *yeah*
23 ANI: *eh we we like to ehm (0.3) go aboard and study aboard*
24 *eh and eh and with erasmus eh*
25 (1.4)
26 MAR: *and you i snak- ta- i taler ikke dansk vel~*
you talk- spe-you don't speak Danish do you
27 BRI: *~jo*
sure
28 ANI: *jo*
sure
29 BRI: *ja*
yes
30 ANI: *jo det kan vi også*
yeah we can do that too
31 (0.3)
32 MAR: *hvor- i er ikke fra dan- (.) fra: Danmark [eller]*
where- you're not from Den- (.) fro:m Denmark or
33 BRI: [xx] *vi er fra tyskland*
xx we are from germany
34 (0.8)
35 ANI: *men vi snakker dansk~*
but we speak Danish
36 MAR: *~↑nå:: okay fint nok (.)*

↑*oh:: okay that's fine*
 37 MAR: og i er fuldtidsstuderende [her] (.)
 and you're full-time students here
 38 BRI: [mmh]
 39 MAR: [*↑okay] (0.2) ja
 ↑*okay (0.2) yes*
 *STA produces smile
 40 ANI: [mmh]

We note that the participants in these data are engaged in the relatively mundane workplace activity of initiating a helpdesk service encounter, as has been described elsewhere (e.g., Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2013; Mortensen & Hazel, 2014; Mondada, this issue). Regarding the language choice practices in evidence here, a number of pertinent observations can be proposed. 1. By initiating her opening account (line 21) for attendance in the way that she does, Anita orients to English as an appropriate, expectable language for this institutional activity, and the member of staff as an English speaker. 2. On hearing the account, the staff member immediately initiates a switch to Danish, thereby orienting to the students as Danish speakers (the medium repair initiation (Gafaranga, 2000) is produced in Danish, line 26). 3. The language alternation to Danish appears premised on the inquiry relating to the topic of study abroad, and the expectation that an inquiry on this would come from Danish national students at the institution, rather than non-local students. 4. The students explicitly account for their being German but also being able to speak Danish (line 30), orienting to their national status and language competences as being somewhat at odds with expectation (lines 33 & 35). 5. The staff member infers that the students are fulltime students, rather than students accommodated at the university for a temporary period. 6. The staff member's change of state token (line 36) marks her new understanding, realigning the inquiry, language choice, institutional status of the students, and their language competences, which provides the grounds for proceeding with the activity (line 39). Taken together, we see that language choice is implicated in such membership categories as 'international student', 'German', 'full-time student' and 'university international staff member' and the concomitant activities of such categories. Indeed, where expectations are confounded, additional work needs to be undertaken to re-calibrate a misalliance between expectation and actuality. At the same time, the membership categories in play here imply particular linguistic identities, and misalignment between institutional and linguistic identity can trigger repair work, with participants needing to account for their language repertoire not type-fitting the institutional position relevant to the encounter.

In the second example, taken from a theatre rehearsal of an international theater ensemble in Denmark, we observe again the multilingual work of the participants. Here, however, language choice is also implicated in the organizing of hearership and reciprocity. In this excerpt, the French theatre director stops the proceedings in order to address an issue with one of the Danish dancers (Ole) on stage, and the French shadow designer takes the opportunity to comment on the lighting to her. Sitting near the director are also the Danish assistant director and Swedish lighting designer (see also Hazel, 2017).

SH-WP-week7-on-stage-rehearsal. FRA Francine (French director); MAR Marco (French creative); SØR Søren (Danish performer)

12 FRA: stop
 13 stop (0.6) stop
 14 (3.5)
 15 FRA: erm:
 16 (3.2)
 17 FRA: ·hhh
 18 MAR: → pour moi il y a beaucoup trop de lumière→ *for me there is too much light*

19		°pour faire erm (1.2) les ombres↘°	<i>for making the shadows</i>
20		(1.3)	
21	FRA: →	er- hva↗	<i>er what</i>
22		(0.7)	
23	MAR: →	there is too much light (.) for er- (.) to have shadows↗	
24		(1.7)	
25		but it's (2.1) is like that→	
26		(6.2)	
27	FRA:	er::m:: søren↗	<i>erm Søren</i>
28	SØR:	jah ↗	<i>yeah</i>
29	FRA:	øh den måde du kommer ud	<i>er that way you come out</i>
30		øh:: du skal ligesom	<i>er you should do it like</i>

In lines 18 and 19, Marco, the artist responsible for shadow play, a fellow French national of director Francine, addresses her with an account for the lighting being too strong to produce the appropriate shadow work on the stage scenery. He does this in the language they typically use between them in one-to-one interactions, namely French. Following a delay and small hesitation marker ‘er’, Francine produces an open-class repair initiator (Drew, 1997), ‘hva’ (line 21, transl. ‘what’). This is in Danish, a language that Marco has no (explicit) proficiency in. In response, and again delayed, Marco reformulates the account in English. We note then that he does not treat the repair initiator as being due to a problem of hearing: he does not repeat the utterance in vocally modified form. Nor does he treat it as a problem of his account being unclear; indeed, he translates the utterance verbatim. Rather, he treats it as relating to his *choice of language*. To understand this, we must turn to the activity in which they are engaged.

Although Marco’s account is directed to the theatre director, the account is relevant for the lighting designer also. She is Swedish, speaks neither French nor Danish, but does understand Danish. We can only speculate about the reason the director’s repair prompt is in Danish, but what it does do is include the lighting designer in the repair, indeed it may act as a prompt to Marco to include the lighting designer in his recipient design of the account, and for the lighting designer to attend to Marco’s account. With Marco not being able to do this in Danish, he is required to opt for the one language that all three members share, in this case English (lines 23 and 25). The account now is given in English, and Francine returns to the reason for the suspension of the action, here relating to some action of one by the dancers (lines 27 onwards). Taken together, we note that in this workplace community, language choice is activated to assist in the management of participation frameworks, with language management affording the members a tool for organizing relevant participation.

The above examples demonstrate that in multilingual workplace groups, language choice is an important resource for constituting the social life of the workplace. Whereas a burgeoning field of workplace studies has described the complex coordination of situated practices in professional settings, typically this has not focused on what the linguistic implications are of the multilingual cohorts of members populating the settings. This collection hopes to foreground this role.

The current collection

The studies in this volume explore the interactional characteristics of institutional environments where members from widely varying sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds must negotiate their positions as members of dynamically fluctuating organizational frameworks. For example, studies seek to explicate the interactional practices that are used in negotiating in-group and out-group membership by co-workers in workplace settings characterized by a mobile and linguistically and culturally diverse workforce. Social actors do this while at the same time preserving their own ‘signature’ identity as culturally demarcated individuals. Studies also describe the ways in which the norms of the

given workplace are implicated in the creation of social action and interaction between culturally diverse members, and how an orientation to such institutional norms and expectations is brought into play as relevant to the workplace activities members are engaged in. Concomitant with these aims, the collection explores whether we can identify particular interactional features that are characteristic of contemporary workplace settings, populated by members of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The research included here applies interaction-analytic methods to scrutinize recordings of social settings of many kinds, constituted by individuals from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, each with their own varying norms and practices, in activities geared toward specific goals and outcomes. Such activities include such settings as meetings, presentations, employee-client transactions, product development, and team-building activities. Even though ideological norms of the host society may hold some sway over norms brought in by non-local members of the community, in these particular social settings where changing constellations of local and non-local members are the order of the day, we may witness an emergence of alternative norms, as participants negotiate joint activities from positions where the dominant ideological discourses of their individual cultural backgrounds will be less and less relevant.

Hence, the current collection argues for greater consideration to be afforded the workplace *activities* in which linguistically diverse co-workers are engaged, in any consideration of their accompanying language practices.

In her article on service encounters in railway stations and customs posts in Switzerland, Mondada shows that greetings in the opening of a conversation provide opportunities for the interactants to propose the choice of a certain language for the encounter, and consequently also to contest and negotiate this choice.

Also related to issues of language choice, Oloff's paper deals with unspecific (or 'open class') repair initiators, both verbal ('huh?') and embodied (for instance raising the eye brows). She notes that in multilingual settings, in her case business meetings and customs posts, such repair initiators may be treated as indicating a problem with the language used by the interlocutor.

Greer & Leyland investigate the world of the language class in a Japanese context. Here, they turn their sights on the work of planning for a class. They look into the preparatory work carried out between teaching staff from different language and cultural backgrounds, which involves the task of settling on names for particular classroom activities that will be understandable to both parties.

The paper by Svennevig also addresses the question of asymmetries of vocabulary, namely how learning new vocabulary items is carried out by workers on a construction site. He shows that word search sequences are expanded beyond the identification of the correct word, and in these expansions L2 speakers check their pronunciation of the new word and L1 speakers provide additional models of pronunciation.

In her article, Tranekjær notes that L1 speakers sometimes ask L2 speakers whether they understand, thereby explicitly orienting to language proficiency. Her paper analyses how such inquiries of understanding are handled in internship interviews, and finds that demonstrations of understanding work better than claims of understanding. This leads her to propose that strategies for claiming and displaying understanding should be implemented in interaction based teaching programs on L2 use in the workplace.

Day & Kristiansen's study also looks at language competence in the workplace, here focusing on claims and demonstrations of linguistic competence and the categorical work implicated in this. They

propose that members assign a certain value to their own or an other's competencies in a language, and suggest there is a member's measurement system which allows certain inferences to be made.

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